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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000719

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC,
CA/OCS/ACS/AF
OSLO FOR HELENA SCHRADER
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/01/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NEW RIVERS GOVERNOR REINVENTS HIMSELF BUT
FACES CHALLENGES IN TRIBUNAL

REF: LAGOS 701

Classified By: Acting Consul General Vicki Hutchinson for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: Recently inaugurated Governor Amaechi of Rivers State has pledged to fight corruption and promised to present a bill creating a Due Process and Public Procurement Commission to the legislature. After having been sidelined by the People's Democratic Party for six months, Amaechi may be able to reinvent himself, and to distance himself from his history with the former administration. He still faces an interesting challenge in the Election Tribunal from the Labor Party candidate who refuses to join Amaechi's unity government. A Tribunal ruling in the opposition's favor could lead to yet another change in governors in Rivers State. End Summary.

Vows to Fight Corruption
Rejects Cultist Accusations

12. (U) Rotimi Amaechi, former Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, was sworn in as Governor of Rivers State on October 27, following the Supreme Court announcement two days earlier that he should replace Governor Celestine Omehia immediately (Reftel). During his inaugural address, Amaechi said he intended to present a bill to the Rivers House of Assembly which would create the Due Process and Public Procurement Commission. He said his administration would fight corruption and hold public officers accountable for mismanagement.

13. (C) Amaechi denied involvement with a "secret cult" and said his administration would not condone cultism or other

acts of criminality in the state. (Comment: Despite common knowledge of Amaechi's cultist ties and that he was former Governor Odili's right-hand man, there has been little criticism of his appointment. End Comment.)

¶4. (C) A civil society contact said Amaechi has been sidelined by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) for the past six months and therefore, has had the opportunity to distance himself from the previous administration. Our contact considered this an opportunity to engage Amaechi and help/allow him to reinvent himself as a politician worthy of grass roots support. Our contact said civil society will watch for concrete actions and will "seek to reinforce and encourage" positive behavior every step of the way. (Comment: Politics in Rivers are corrupt and complicated; that Amaechi would seek to turn a new leaf seems overly optimistic. However, his statements do present civil society a platform on which to engage him. End Comment.)

¶5. (U) According to press reports, Amaechi found the State only had naira 100 million in its coffers, despite having earned naira 113 billion since Omehia took office in May. Also missing were government computers, office equipment, and armored vehicles. Radios and accessories in eighteen brand new unallocated vehicles were reportedly looted.

Opposition Strengthened By Supreme Court Decision

¶6. (C) Ashley Emenike, Labor Party candidate in the Rivers State gubernatorial election, thought Rotimi Amaechi's recent governorship appointment by the Supreme Court would aid his

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case in the Election Tribunal. Emenike commented fresh elections would have complicated his case, but Amaechi's appointment will enable him to continue "more cheaply" as his petition claims he should win the governorship since neither Amaechi nor Omehia were legitimate party candidates. Emenike was confident he could claim the governorship as he came in second with over 100,000 votes. However, on October 30 Emenike told Poloff he continues to receive pressure and threats to join Amaechi's unity government as did the Action Congress candidate Tonye Princewill, who dropped his case before the Tribunal. Emenike said he does not support Amaechi's "unity government" and he would not abandon his case.

¶7. (C) Emenike thought thuggery and violence would decrease now that aggrieved parties could take their concerns to court. "Judicial intervention" would replace coups as vehicles for change, he averred. However, he predicted that by early November citizens, angered by Amaechi's return to government, would begin to coalesce and speak out. Amaechi, who has known cultist ties, is not popularly supported in Rivers, but there was joy in the streets the day of his ruling because Omehia was instructed to step down. Emenike said Omehia did nothing for the state during his five months as governor.

¶8. (C) Comment: Emenike's Tribunal case will be an interesting one. The Tribunal must decide whether to allow a governor, whose name was never on the ballot but who was ordered sworn in pursuant to a Supreme Court decision, to remain in office. Rivers is a volatile state, and either the Tribunal's ruling or the upcoming local government elections could serve as a catalyst for further violence. End Comment.
HUTCHINSON